

Sieur du Luth

314

SIEUR DULUTH. THE EXPLORER BETWEEN MILLE LACS AND LAKE SUPERIOR.

One of the early French writers on the Northwest, remarks:—"In the last year of M. de Frontenac's first administration, Sieur Du Luth , a man of talent and experience, opened a way to the missionaries and the gospel in many different nations, turning toward the North of that lake (Superior) where he even built a fort. He advanced as far as the Lake of the Issati (Mille Lac) called Lake Buade, from the family name of M. De Frontenac ." This gentleman had been a resident of the city of Lyons, and was a cousin of the one-handed Chevalier Tonty , the true friend and companion of La Salle .

He appears to have been in the neighborhood of Lake Superior, as early as 1679. He was the first to build a fort at Pigeon river—the stream with its chain of lakes that separates Minnesota from the British possessions,—which trading post is still maintained under the name of Fort Charlotte, though in the days of the French regime it was called: *Kamanistigoya* .

While on Lake Superior, he killed two Iroquois, who had assassinated two Frenchmen, and the act so exasperated the Iroquois nation in New York, that it led to the Iroquois war with the French. While trading at the head of Lake Superior, he became acquainted with the Dakotas, and sought out their central residence at Mille Lac. Hennepin in his map of the Dakota country, calls the St. Croix "the River of the Tomb," and gives a mark for the Falls.

315

In the geographical description of the country, he describes the St. Croix as "a river full of rapids, by which, striking Northwest, you can reach Lake Conde (Superior) that is as far as Namissakouat river, which empties into the take. This first river is called Tomb River, because the Issati left there the body of one of their warriors * * * * * Lake Buade

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or the Lake of the Issati (Mille Lac) is about seventy leagues West of Lake Conde. It is impossible to go from one to the other on account of the marshy ground, though on snow-shoes, it might be done. By water it is one hundred and fifty leagues; on account of the windings and portages. From Lake Conde, to go conveniently in canoes, you must pass by Tomb (St. Croix) river." This information the Franciscan must have obtained from Du Luth , who with a party of Frenchmen, very unexpectedly made his appearance among the Dakotas, who held Hennepin as a Captive in the month of July, 1680.

At the time the Indians were on a buffalo hunt in the valley of the Mississippi, Hennepin's account of the meeting with Du Luth is as follows:

The old man on duty, on the top of the bluffs, announced that he saw two warriors in the distance. All the bowmen hastened there with speed, and trying to outstrip the others, but they brought back only two of their own women, who came to tell them, that a party of their people were hunting at the extremity of Lake Conde (Superior) and had found five spirits (so they call the French,) who by means of a captive had expressed a wish to visit them.

On the 25th of July as we were ascending the Colbert (Mississippi) after the buffalo hunt, to the Indian villages 316 we met the Sieur Du Luth who came to the Nadouesseous with five French soldiers, and merchandize." In all probability they came to the Mississippi by way of the St. Croix. Du Luth engaged Hennepin as a guide and companion while visiting the Mdewakantonwan Dakotas.

On the 14th of August 1680 they arrived at the villages towards the sources of the Rum River. Towards the end of September the Indians were informed that it would be necessary to return to Canada. to procure more merchandize. A great council having been held, they consented. Ouasicoude ,* the head chief, prepared for them a chart of the route, by way of the Mississippi and Wisconsin, so Green Bay. Wintering at Mackinaw, Du Luth and Hennepin appear to have arrived at Quebec in the spring of 1681. The latter

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hastened to France, never to return to America, but to write a book, which has given him the reputation of an unprincipled and boasting adventurer.

* The name of the chief in Dakota was Wazi-kute, (Wah-zee-koo-tay.) or the "Shooter of the Pines" Long's expedition in 1823 met a Dakota at Red Wing who bore the same name as the chief alluded to in the travels of Hennepin.

Du Luth appears to have been a man of influence in Quebec. At a conference of some of the distinguished public men in the city, in relation to the difficulties with the Iroquois, held October 10th, 1682, Du Luth was present.

In the month of March, 1684, notwithstanding all the attempts of the French to keep the peace, a band of Seneca and Cayuga warriors, having met seven canoes manned by fourteen Frenchmen, with fifteen or sixteen thousand pounds of merchandise, who were going to trade with the "Scious," pillaged and made them prisoners, and after detaining them nine days, sent them away without arms, food or canoes. This attack caused much alarm in Canada, 317 and Du Luth, who appeared to have been in command at Green Bay, was ordered by the Governor of Canada to come and state the number of allies he could bring. With great expedition he came to Niagara, the place of rendezvous, with a band of Indians, and would alone have attacked the Senecas had it not been for an express order from De La Barre, the Governor, to desist.

When Louis The Fourteenth heard of this Outbreak, he felt, to use his words, "that it was a grave 'misfortune for the colony of New France" and then in his letter to the Governor, he adds: "It appears to me that one of the principal causes of the war arises from one Du Luth having caused two Iroquois to be killed, who had assassinated two Frenchmen, in Lake Superior, and you sufficiently see how much this man's voyage, which cannot produce any advantage to the colony, and which was permitted only in the interest of some private persons, has contributed to distract the repose of the colony."

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The English of New York, knowing the hostility of the Iroquois to the French, used the opportunity to trade with the distant Indians. In 1685, one Roseboom , with some young men, had traded with the Ottawas in Michigan.

In the year 1686, an old Frenchman who had long lived among the Dutch and English in New York, came to Montreal, to visit a child at the Jesuit boarding school, and he stated that a Major Mcgregory , of Albany, was contemplating an expedition to Mackinac.

Denonville , the new Governor of Canada, ordered Du Luth to proceed to the present Detroit River, and watch whether the English passed into Lake St. Clair. In accordance with the order, he left Green Bay. Being provided with fifty armed men, he established a post called Fort St. Joseph, some thirty miles above Detroit.

In the year 1687, on the 19th of May, the brave and distinguished 318 Tonty , who was a cousin of Du Luth , arrived at Detroit, from his fort on the Illinois. Durantaye and Du Luth , knowing that he had arrived, came down from fort St. Joseph with thirty captive English. Here Tonty and Du Luth joined forces and proceeded toward the Iroquois country. As they were coasting Lake Erie, they met and captured Major Mcgregory , of Albany, then on his way with thirty Englishmen, to trade with the Indians at Mackinac.

Du Luth , having reached Lake Ontario, we find him engaged in that conflict with the Senecas of the Genessee valley, when Father Angleran , the superintendent of the Mackinac mission, was severely but not mortally wounded. After this battle, he returned, in company with Tonty , to his post on the Detroit River.

In 1689, immediately previous to the burning of Schenectady, we find him again fighting the Iroquois in the neighborhood, and there is reason to suppose that he was engaged in the midnight sack of that town. As late as the year 1696, we find him on duty at Fort Frontenac; but after the peace of Ryswick , which occasioned a suspension of hostilities,

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we hear nothing more of this man, who was the first of whom we have any account, who came by way of Lake Superior to the Upper Mississippi.